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PURPOSE OF THE JOURNAL

- To present theoretical and research papers in scientific graphology according to academic standards.
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- To provide an exchange with the international professional graphological community.

SOCIETY ADDRESS AND ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

The American Society of Professional Graphologists
23 South Drive, Great Neck, New York 11021
Website: www.aspghandwriting.org

JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Journal of the American Society of Professional Graphologists
261 Summit Avenue, Summit, New Jersey 07901

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The American Society of Professional Graphologists

ISSN: 1048-390X

MARIE ANTOINETTE SEEN THROUGH HER HANDWRITINGS

Renata Propper

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to show the changes in the handwritings of Marie Antoinette and how they relate graphologically to the extraordinary course of her life. However, the conclusions also serve as an example of how life's circumstances and background affect and influence people's behavior. *We can see the basic character in the handwriting, but behavior has to be interpreted in context of the subject's particular circumstances.* The two are closely hinged together, and often the latter is not given enough attention.

This article is gratefully dedicated to my aunt, my friend, and my talented and enthusiastic pupil in graphology, the late Liliane de Rothschild, who knew more about Marie Antoinette than anybody in France today. Without her inspiration and active help this article would not have been possible. Special thanks go, as always, to my mentor and friend Dr. Hans Knobloch, who gave me guidance and advice throughout this endeavor. I also want to thank my patient editor, colleague, and friend Patricia Siegel.

Even today, Marie Antoinette is a person of controversy. Some people still criticize her superficiality and spendthrift habits, whilst others consider her a heroine and martyr for the royalist cause. Who then was the real Marie Antoinette? Looking at the handwritings in the various stages of her life one can get a much better idea of her development. Soon after I started my research about Marie Antoinette's life, I became overwhelmed by the wealth of the material, the many letters and other documentation. First, some of the background story, without getting lost in the intricate labyrinths of European history in the 18th century and its various and inevitable power plays. To start with, it is essential to know that both the Archduchess Maria Antonia of Austria and Louis, the Dauphin of France, were innocent pawns in the game of statecraft, to be sacrificed to an ill-fated Franco-Austrian alliance.

Maria Antonia was born in 1755, the youngest daughter of the Emperor Franz Stephan and Maria Theresia, Empress of Austria. It was the latter who ruled her inherited Habsburg lands with a firm hand and able ministers, while her father Franz Stephan (of Lorraine) played a less important role in politics, but had all the more time for his numerous children. Maria Antonia was her father's favorite, while her mother often had cause to scold her. The imperial couple were devoted to each

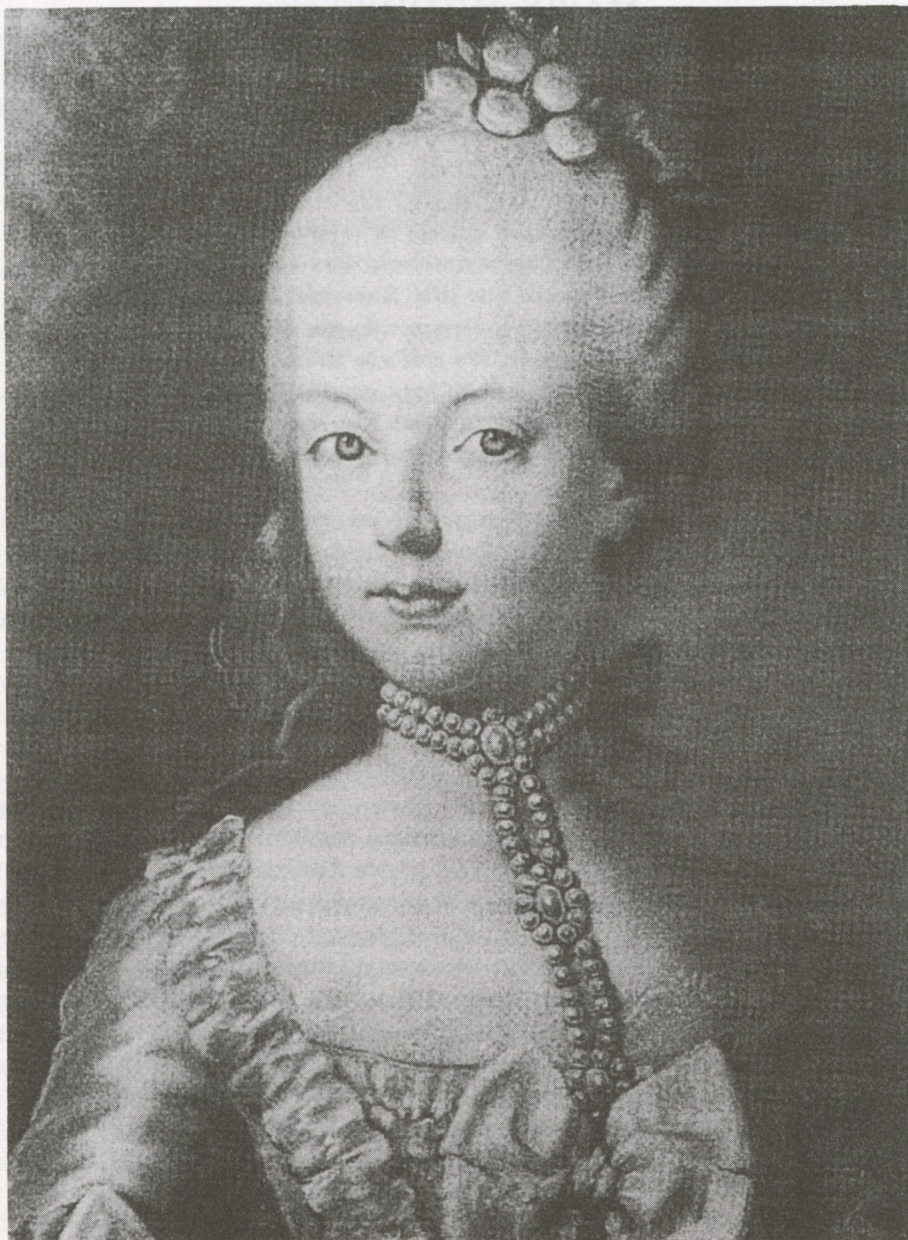


**Figure 1: Marie Antoinette, portrait by Krantzinger,
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.**

other, rather unusual at the time of arranged royal marriages. Maria Theresia had sixteen children. They were a loving, united family, living in a happy home. The children preferred the palace and park in Schoenbrunn to the more formal Hofburg in the center of Vienna, where they were allowed to enjoy the freedom and gaiety, romping outdoors to their heart's delight.

The little Maria Antonia never liked sitting still, disliked studying or doing her homework; quite often she was able to charm her nice governesses into doing it for her! Maria Theresia, who had grand plans for all her children, sometimes despaired, and had to make last minute efforts to prepare her better for becoming the wife of the heir of the French throne, Madame la Dauphine. Maria Antonia knew all along that daughters were married off for political reasons, as tradition demanded. Austria was known for this, hence the proverbial: "Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube" (Other nations conduct war, you, happy Austria marry). Years later, on becoming queen, Marie Antoinette wrote gratefully to her mother: "I can not but admire providence that elected me, the last of your children, for the most beautiful Kingdom in Europe."

It was a sad, ominous day for the fourteen-year-old Maria Antonia, when, with a heavy heart, she set out on the long, rattling journey in a big coach, leaving her beloved family forever. After weeks of tedious travel, reaching the river Rhine, she was told that her Austrian entourage would be left behind. Now, it was time to become a true French princess, and assume the name Marie Antoinette. A pavilion on an island in the river, built especially for the occasion, provided the stage for the transfer. Marie Antoinette was forced to undress, in order to wear only French clothes. No wonder that she collapsed in tears into the arms of her new formal French Lady in Waiting, who was less sympathetic than her own family would have been. It was with apprehensive anticipation that she looked forward to meeting her future husband, the Dauphin (successor to the French throne), the old King (grandfather of Louis), and all her many new relatives. Everything felt new and strange at Versailles; she had nobody to confide in. And how different her new relatives were in comparison to her own dear, cozy family in Vienna. But conscious of the mission Maria Theresia entrusted her with, she tried hard to please. *"I love that nobody leaves me unhappy..."*

Meeting the Dauphin, her husband to be, she could not have been impressed. A tall but clumsy looking boy of fifteen, he was not more ready for marriage than Marie Antoinette at fourteen. And yet she had to go through all the formal ceremonies of marriage, suffering while people watched both of them undress and slip into the royal wedding bed, not to speak of the whispering comments the next day. However, her usually so effective charm did not impress her brand new husband. Nothing much happened during her wedding night, nor for a long time to follow. Everything was so different at a court where nothing was allowed and everyone had to follow an exact, strict protocol, which she often found very tedious. Writing endless letters to her mother, she described her daily routine, but also spoke of her deep concerns about her troubled relationship with her husband.

"I get up between nine and ten o'clock, and having dressed say my prayers, then have breakfast and go to visit my old aunts, where I usually find the King. This lasts till ten thirty. At eleven I have my hair dressed. After which everyone is allowed to come in – that is everyone who has the right to entry. I put on my rouge and wash my hands in front of them all. Then the gentlemen go away, while the ladies stay and I put on my formal dress. Mass at midday, and if the King is at Versailles I go with the King and my husband. After mass my husband dines alone, but anyone who cares to can come and watch us. As we both eat very quickly we have finished by half past one, and go back with the Dauphin to his apartments, but if he is busy I go back to my own, where I read or write or work, for I am embroidering a waistcoat for the King; which is not making much progress, but by the Grace of God I hope to get finished in a few years. At three o'clock I go again to my aunts where I usually find the King. At four the Abbe Vermond comes to see me and at five there is the music master, who stays till six when I return to my aunts or go for a walk. I must tell you that my husband almost always comes with me to visit the old aunts. At seven we sit down to cards, but if it's fine I go again for a walk. At nine we have supper and if the King is not there the aunts come and have supper with us. Otherwise we go to them, where after supper we wait for the King, who usually appears at about quarter to eleven. But while waiting I put myself onto a comfortable sofa and sleep till he arrives. When he is not there we go to bed at eleven."

In the course of her marriage and especially during the tragedies in her later life she got to appreciate the profound goodness, honesty, and dignity of her husband. He loved his children in his own way, becoming very close to them and his wife during the last years together, drawing strength from their family life. However, there were long years before that happened, when their life together was enmeshed in the vicious intrigues of the French court. While Marie Antoinette was used to a certain court formality in her early childhood, nothing prepared her for the outer glitter and the inner depravity and hypocrisy of the French court in the last years of Louis XV's reign.

The Austrian Ambassador, Count de Mercy, whom her mother assigned the role of mentor and confidant, described it as "a place of perfidy, hate, and vengeance." Marie Antoinette often felt lost, bored with the endless hollow ceremonies and their monotony. In order to escape many pitfalls at court, she learned to dissimulate and hide her feelings. Surrounded by courtiers and relatives, she gradually realized that not everybody had her best interests at heart; she never knew whom to trust. Her own instincts were often right, but the influence and sycophancy of the people surrounding her were often confusing. Her mother continued to scold and to lecture her in her letters:

"What is all this fuss and bother, this fear of speaking to the King who is the best of fathers, of addressing as much as a word to people whom you have been asked to speak to, the inability to say good morning, or make a compliment or exchange a triviality. All these tiresome caprices for no good reason than that you have allowed yourself to become enslaved by your aunts that you have forgotten both reason and duty. I cannot remain silent about your failure to obey Comte Mercy after the conversation in which he told you explicitly the wishes of the King, etc. I read in the gazettes

that your hair-dresses of ribbons and feathers get higher every day. You know that I have always been of the opinion that one should follow the fashion in moderation. A pretty young queen with natural attractions has no need to indulge in such follies. On the contrary a simple head-dress should only serve to enhance her charms and is also more suited to her rank. It is for you to set the fashion and everyone will follow whatever you choose to do."

Soon she made some good friends of her own, who helped to distract her from her troubles, arranging exciting, but also frivolous and costly entertainments. She became their leader, setting the "bon ton" (right tone). Some people were scandalized by their excursion to the balls in Paris. Being still so very young and carefree by nature, she preferred to play, to dance, and to have fun, rather than to concentrate on the serious issues of state. No wonder that her brother the Emperor Joseph on his visit to Paris, severely criticized and reprimanded her about "your dreadful fickleness and passion for gambling." About her late-night expedition: "The King left alone for a whole night at Versailles and you mixing with all the Paris riffraff!"

As time went on, she became very discouraged and lonely. She did not get pregnant; her husband avoided her, spending much of his days hunting. It took her many years to understand his personality, so unfit for the artificiality of the French court. He sought refuge in his hobbies and outdoor life which she sometimes shared with him (riding sometimes in a man's saddle), earning the disapproval of her strict mother, who sent stern letters to her throughout her lifetime.

Upon the death of Louis XV, the Dauphin and Dauphine became King and Queen of France, an absolute monarchy at the time. She was nineteen; Louis was twenty. For the first time she felt that she had the power to do as she wished, choosing her own friends and setting the tone at court. The relationship between husband and wife improved after a visit of Marie Antoinette's brother the Emperor Joseph, who gave advice, or rather more of a lecture to the fumbling husband. This produced at long last the wished-for results. Marie Antoinette became pregnant soon afterward, seven years after her arrival in France. In all, she had four children, but lost two while they were still very young.

The Dauphin, and later as the King, loved his people. Intent to do right, he did not always have the force to convince others of his wishes or plans. The new King seemed to have won the hearts of the people. Since the death of his grandfather, he never stopped working, answering personally all the ministers whom he could not see: "...What is certain is that he wished to economize and make his subjects happy...." Long-term, however, he was too tentative and indecisive, letting the country slip away under his fingers; when revolutionary ideas gained in momentum, he hesitated too often, avoiding taking action.

For Americans it is important to know, however, that it was Louis XVI, and not Lafayette, who financed the expedition to fight in the War for Independence, an expenditure that contributed greatly to the financial problems of his reign. Eventually, in the course of the revolutionary events, the King and Queen became

prisoners of the people, changing their life drastically. Abandoned by many of their closest friends and family, they become isolated, pawns and later prisoners of the revolutionary government. Marie Antoinette became the much calumniated and hated "Autrichienne" (the "Austrian"). Their suffering and humiliation had no end, became horrendous, making a very different person of the once so frivolous Queen.

She never lost faith in the divine right entrusted to her at birth. After all, she was the daughter of the mighty Maria Theresia, a formidable, inspiring role-model. It was important to keep her head high, to face the hardships and calumnies inflicted on them with courage and dignity. Mirabeau (Marquis de, a guiding light to the French revolution) quotes: "The King has only one man with him – his wife! Another young Frenchman, Barnave, said of her: "One could not approach her, without loving her."

Their eventual life in prison was a far cry from the glamour of Versailles. They learned who their true friends were. Among them, one stood out in loyalty and devotion, the Swedish nobleman Axel Fersen, who was a very dear friend (lover?) of the Queen. In a letter to him she wrote:

"But do understand...my position and the role which I am obliged to play all day long? There are times when I do not understand myself, and am obliged to think to see whether it is really me who is speaking...when I am sad, I take my little boy in my arms and kiss him with all my heart, and this consoles me for the moment...." And toward the end, after the tragedy of the unsuccessful flight to Varennes, excerpts from a letter: "I can tell you that I love you, and indeed that is all I have time for. I am well. Do not worry about me. I would like to know that you are well too."

The King and Queen spent an anxious time imprisoned in the Temple; later, Marie Antoinette was taken to the Conciergerie, where she spent her last months. Living through the execution of the King, fearing for the lives of her children, she suffered separations and countless humiliations.

Finally, after her trial by the revolutionary tribunal, she had to prepare for death, as her own execution approached. She was a very sick woman by then (probably suffering from cancer). Alone during her last days, she was not even allowed to be driven to the Place de la Revolution in the privacy of a coach, a privilege that was accorded the King. With her hands tied behind her back, she was dragged to the Square of the Revolution (today Place de la Concorde) in an ordinary cart, exposed to the cruelties of the gaping spectators. Despite everything, her enemies could not break her spirit; the night before she was to die, she wrote one memorable letter to her sister-in-law, Madame Elisabeth:

"It is to you, my sister, that I write for the last time. I have just been sentenced, not to a shameful death, for it is shameful only for criminals, but to join your brother. Innocent like I am, I hope to show the firmness he showed in these last moments. I am calm as one is when one's conscience is clear; I deeply regret having to abandon my poor children; you know that I lived only for them and for you, my good and loving sister. You who have out of friendship sacrificed everything to be with us. In what a position I leave you! ... May my son never forget his father's last

words, which I expressly repeat to him, that he never seek to avenge our death...

"It remains for me to confine my last thoughts to you...I die in the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion, the religion of my fathers, the one in which I was brought up and always professed. I expect no spiritual consolation, not even knowing if there still are priests of that religion, and furthermore the place where I am would expose them to too much danger, if they were to visit me...I forgive all my enemies the harm they have done me. I here bid farewell to my aunts and all my brothers and sisters. I had friends. The thought of being separated from them forever and their sorrow is among my greatest regrets. Farewell my good and loving sister, may this letter reach you! Think of me always. I embrace you with all my heart as well as those poor children. My God! How heartbreaking it is to part with them forever. Farewell! Farewell!"

MARIE ANTOINETTE'S BASIC HANDWRITING

Portrait (Figure 1), handwriting at age 14 (Figure 2), and at age 15, during the first year at Versailles (Figure 3)

The handwriting is rather crude, but has childish innocence. Spontaneous, more impulsive than controlled, as one imagines a typical carefree girl in development (during puberty), with its ensuing unevenness. There is a certain pull between structure and lack of steering. Foremost, it breathes vitality, a strong will, showing innate shrewdness but also a lack of intellectual curiosity and finesse. Her visible drive and restlessness translated in her need for action and motion. The handwriting's pastosity indicates her earthiness, her warmth and sympathy toward people, seeking contact and response.

The handwriting has hardly any "aristocratic pretensions" or mannerism. She does not need them, knowing who she was. An early identification with her strong, almighty mother gives her life a guideline and assurance. More negatively, the handwriting projects a certain lack of care and some indifference for appearances, which do not present the ideal predisposition for life at court. More like a "pony that is not broken in yet," one can see her running around with her brothers and sisters in the park of Schoenbrunn. (Gracious and pretty, she was very popular, knowing how to charm people. At fourteen she makes the effort to please her mother, accepting, up to a point, her authority.)

There is however, a rebellious, *strong willed streak* in the handwriting, a resistance to be cast into a meek mold. As a result she often showed a stubborn attitude, defying her relatives when common sense should have guided her to act with more tact and diplomacy. It was her pride and childish egotism that caused many of her impulsive reactions, preventing her from foreseeing the heavy consequences of some of her actions. While the handwriting shows that Marie Antoinette had a good head on her shoulders, she was neither studious or given to much serious thinking; unwilling to concentrate on what she considered (in her teens) as boring, she voiced

regrets of it in later years. There are definitively sharp and rough edges in her young personality; neither was she without a certain malice and spitefulness.

Basically, she was kind and well meaning; her instincts were usually right, but not so her judgment. The over-all potential of Marie Antoinette at fourteen can be viewed as positive: a strong personality, with much good fundamental potential to work with, as well as natural resilience to cope with tough situations. At present, she

Majesté promettra que
je lui envoie une lettre
pour Naples dans laquelle
~~je~~ j'avertis ma sœur
d'envoyer ~~les~~ ses lettres
par Vienne j'ai l'honneur
d'être avec vos
respectueuses tendresses

la plus tendre
et soumise
fille
Antoinette

Figure 2: MarieAntoinette, letter to her mother, July 9, 1770, age 14, Archives de Vienne.

lacks higher intellectual strivings or empathy, but she is healthy and normal in her tastes and attitudes. In other words, when she arrived in France she was still a naive and innocent child; one could call her "a rough diamond" in need of guidance and somebody who would appeal to the better instincts. This is not at all what she found at the French court. (Her resilience and strong resolve showed that in late life she was able to become a true daughter of Maria Theresia.)

Je ne vous parle point ma chere
Maman de la nomination de
Mr. d'Aiguillon ne me melanc
point L'affaire. L'on dit que
s'est le coadjuteur de Strasbourg
qui doit aller a Vienne. il Est
de tres grand maison mais la
vie quil a toijoars tenu ressemble
plus a celle d'un soldat que d'un
coadjuteur.

Adieu ma chere Maman je vous
embrasse de bon coeur et vous aime
tendrement

Antoinette

Figure 3: Marie Antoinette, letter to her mother, June 21, 1771, age 15,
Archives de Vienne.

HANDWRITING OF THE QUEEN

Middle years, handwritings at age 25 (Figures 4 and 5)

Looking at the second stage of her handwriting we see marked changes. It lost its spontaneity, but acquired a more “gainly” formality. It is known that her illustrious but critical mother commented on the bad quality of her juvenile handwriting, which, as explained by the go-between Ambassador Mercy, was in part due to the circumstances when she wrote them. Afraid that her letters could be intercepted, she wrote them often

*Je ne pensois, Monsieur, qu'à exprimer
à mon auguste mère, mon sentiment le
plus vrai sur l'avantage qu'elle a d'avoir
un ministre, aussi fidèle et aussi capable
que vous, je suis sensible au prix que
vous mettez à mon témoignage, et charmée
que ma chère maman, vous en ait fait
part, puisqu'elle me procure l'occasion
de vous le confirmer, et vous assurer
tout à la fois et de ma plus haute
estime, et de la reconnaissance, que
je conserverai toute ma vie, pour les
services que vous ne cessez de rendre pour
cette alliance, qui m'est si précieuse*

Marie Antoinette

Figure 4: Marie Antoinette, letter, May 15, 1780, age 25,
Archives de Vienne.

fièvre qui s'est réglé en tierce, l'expose en outre le
 détail de ma chère maman, et m'assure qu'il n'y a
 pas de danger; depuis hier l'accès a manqué c'est
 veuille que cela soit fini, je suis touchée de la
 douceur et de la patience de cette pauvre petite
 au milieu de ses souffrances qui dans certains moments
 ont été fort vives.

le roy est allé faire une course de chasse pour
 trois jours à Compiègne, je passe ce temps là à
 trianon, le 19 nous irons à marly, la compagnie sera
 plus nombreuse, et par conséquent bien plus d'étiquette
 et à la longue je reprendrai toute la représentation
 de cour, qui ne peut être entière icy que pendant
 l'hiver.

Il y a bien longtemps que nous couchons séparés, je
 croyois que, ma chère maman, ne l'ignoroit pas, c'est un
 usage fort general icy, entre mary et femme, et
 je n'ai pas eu de voir tourmenter le roy, sur ~~cette~~
 cette article qui contrarieroit beaucoup sa manière

d'être et son gout personnel, j'aurois d'autant
 plus de tort à m'y obstiner que nous vivons tres
 maritalement ensemble.
 La paix seroit un grand bien, mais si nos ennemis

Figure 5: Marie Antoinette, letter to her mother, October 13, 1780, age 25,
 Archives d'Etat d'Autriche.

in a hurry, fearful of surprise visits by Louis or his old aunts. The new handwriting is slower, disconnected, more isolated. This was partly a self-conscious effort to improve and adjust her writing to her elevated status. (The Ambassador Mercy refers to the new style as "painted," as it is more poised, with the pen deliberately set on paper.)

Mostly this reflects the *protective facade she was forced to adopt in order to survive the atmosphere of the French court*. The handwriting is a product of her need for a *mask to dissimulate her true feelings*, and belongs to a family of writings of diplomats and statesmen of the time. It varies somewhat according to the mood, or to the person she was writing to. At the same time it reflects the inner vacuum, a standstill in development, lacking the active thrust of her previous writing. However, some of these earlier more negative aspects in her early handwriting that went, so to speak, underground, still come into play. Her average intelligence, her careless attitude, her impressionable impulsiveness and thoughtlessness contributed greatly to her unpopularity. Although she was kind and sympathetic in personal gestures, she could be arrogant and tactless in the political arena. The sharp edges expressed themselves in her sarcastic streak; she was known to enjoy making fun of people. (A typically Viennese, often self-deprecating humor!! Basically, in her tastes she stayed very Viennese.) She did not always realize how much the people at court were talking behind her back and how many enemies she made. Without guidance, or loving care, this young girl could not trust anyone at this most corrupted court in Europe. She was nineteen when she became queen, with a seemingly almighty position. She wanted to please, underestimating the hostility and intrigues of her surroundings. Suffering from the frustrations of the non-consummation of her marriage, she threw herself head over shoulders into entertainments, irresponsible gambling, indulging in luxuries and frivolities, with all the compulsion of her underlying personality. This reputation still haunts her today. Her attitude changed considerably when she became a mother, and even more when events forced her to face facts. This handwriting demonstrates well how much one not only can, but must deduct about a person's behavior in the context of the background and the special circumstances in which the scripter is living.

THE HANDWRITING OF THE QUEEN IN HER LAST YEARS

"The woman she became" (Figures 6 and 7)

Marie Antoinette's later letters gain in spontaneity and *individualistic expression*, with reminders of the handwriting from her youth. It clearly shows the inner growth and development of her personality. More cohesive, natural breathing with genuine feelings and life, it is the writing of a complete, mature woman of stature and bearing. Marie Antoinette has developed an inner equanimity, without losing resolve or strength. The handwriting is controlled but flowing, reflecting her firm focus and

je ne vous envoie qu'un mot ~~anglais~~
~~pour vous dire que je suis~~ la personne
qui vous porte celle-ci
notre ^{me} va connaître notre
position telle qu'elle, est & en
entière confiance, et il la mettra
par son attachement, et sa raison
il porte un mémoire absurde
mais que je suis obligée d'envoyer,
il est essentiel, que l'imp.
soit bien persuadé qu'il n'y a
pas la un mot, qui soit de nous
n'y de notre manière de voir les
choses, mais qu'il me fasse
pourtant une réponse, comme
si il croyoit que c'est la même
manière de voir, et que je puisse
montrer; car ils sont si méfians
luy qu'ils exigeront la réponse

Figure 6: Marie Antoinette, letter to Axel Fersen, January 1792, age 37.

de faire dire à son enfant ce qu'on veut, et même ce qu'il ne comprend
 pas. un jour vindrai j'espère ou il ne sentira que même tout le monde
 de vos bontés et de votre tendresse pour tous deux. ~~il me~~ ^{vous} a deux
 confies encore, mes dernières prières, j'ai vu les écrire des le
 commencement des procès, mais outre qu'on se me l'aurait pas
 eue la marche en a été si rapide, qu'elle n'en eue
 réellement pas eu le temps.
 Je meurt dans la religion apostolique et romaine, dans
 celle de mes pères dans ~~la~~ ^{la} que j'ai été élevée et que j'ai toujours
 gardant aucune consolation spirituelle à attendre, ne sachant pas
 si il existe encore icy des pasteurs de cette religion, et même si l'un
 ou si tous les capotrait trop si ils y entrent un jour. Je demande
 sincèrement pardon à Dieu de toutes les fautes que j'ai pu commettre
 depuis que j'existe, j'espère que dans sa bonté, il voudra bien
 recevoir mes dernières prières, ainsi que ceux que je fais depuis
 longtemps pour qu'il veuille bien recevoir mon âme dans sa
 miséricorde. Je demande pardon à tout ceux que je connais et
 à vous ma mère, en particulier, de toutes les prières que sans le
 vouloir j'aurais pu ^{vous causer} ~~vous faire~~. Je pardonne à tous mes ennemis le

ARCHIVES
 1871

authentic sense of self. It has gained in sensitivity and ability to differentiate. Steadfast, persistent, courageous, she held her own like the Queen she was, neither intimidated by threats, nor becoming vindictive in her mentality.

She was able to support others, instilling the people near her with courage, faith, and calm. Both she and the King grew into heroic figures when tragedy struck their lives. Just as the testament of Louis XVI which is a moving proof of his love and care for his people, Marie Antoinette's last letter of "Good-by" to her sister-in-law, that has survived many vicissitudes of fate itself, is a poignant document in both form and content. Intensive, in part for lack of space, it reflects her heavy heart and eagerness to communicate her last wishes. It is a far cry from the carefree, fun-loving, willful young girl, who set out with high hopes on her journey but who was given hardly any preparation for the kind of life that awaited her. She was only thirty-eight when she died by guillotine.

HANDWRITING OF KING LOUIS XVI

Handwritings at ages 12 and 39 (Figures 8 and 9),
Portrait (Figure 10)

When I first saw the handwriting of Louis the XVI I was thoroughly surprised by its high form level and quality. His diary at age twelve is remarkable. The handwriting has quality. It is solid, serious, methodical, with genuine depth and substance. One usually hears more negative criticism than praise about this misunderstood and underestimated monarch. He took his responsibilities very much to heart, showing genuine care and love for his people. A contemporary quote said: "He was one of these unfortunate persons whose first instincts were right, but who rarely had the courage to stand by his decisions." This eventually cost him his throne and later on his life.

He was a real misfit as far French court life was concerned; he preferred studying, reading, watching classical plays, rather than participating in balls and other superficial entertainments. He excelled in geography and was well read in history and philosophy and spoke many languages. Tall, heavy, strong, and rather clumsy, he found refuge in riding and hunting as well as acquiring proficiency in handicrafts. Having never been really loved or cared for when he was a child, he became a taciturn, suspicious, melancholic loner. (In contrast, the fun-loving Marie Antoinette enjoyed being the Queen, but lacked her Prince Charming, whom she later encountered in Axel Fersen.) Looking at Louis XVI's handwriting, one can well imagine what he *could* have achieved within the right and proper framework.

Gifted with an excellent technical mind, striving for knowledge, he could have been a productive professional, or even a constitutional monarch surrounded by people who appreciated his good qualities. He was, however, not an audacious leader,

mercredi — 16 remue de ci de là Montois. nom. de ci de Chambrea
 dimanche — 17 + nom. de ci de Montciel.
 jeudi — 18 nom. de M^{re} Beaulieu.
 vendredi — 19 prom. a pied dans le jardin a 9^h.
 samedi — 20 affaire des Suilleries.
 dimanche — 21
 lundi — 22
 mardi — 23
 mercredi — 24 + Reue de la 1^{re} Legion aux Champs Elises a 11^h.
 jeudi — 25 Prom. dans les Cours et le Jardin apres la messe,
 les Gardes Nationales et quelques
 vendredi — 26
 samedi — 27
 dimanche — 28 Attnie de ci de la fagette.
 lundi — 29 + il devoit y avoir la revue de la 2^{de} Legion aux
 mardi — 30

Figure 8: King Louis XVI, handwriting at age 12. (Reproduced at 95%)

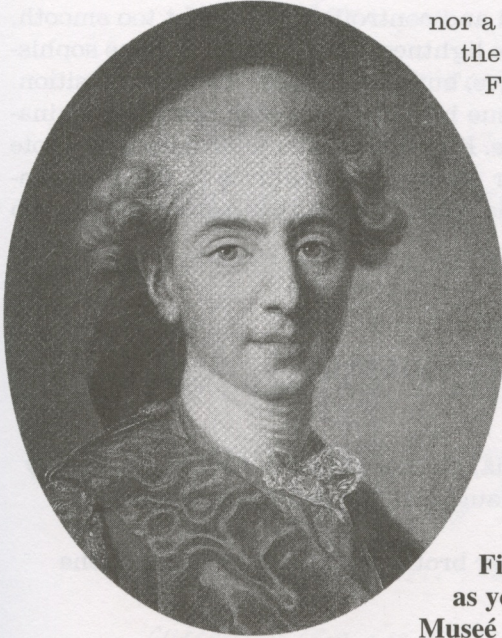
Clary des soins duquel j'ai eu toute l'âme de ma l'âme depuis qu'il est avec moi
comme d'ici lui qui est resté avec moi jusqu'à la fin, je prie à de la
Comme de lui remettre mes hanches mes l'âme ma montre ma bourse, et
les autres parts effets qui ont été déposés au Conseil de la Comédie.

Je par donne encore vos volontés à ceux qui ont gardé, les manoirs
trouvés et les gens dont ils ont eu devoir user envers moi. Je trouve
quelques âmes sensibles et comparissantes, que celles de j'aurais dans
leur âme de la tranquillité que doit leur donner leur façon de penser.

Je prie M^r de Malesherbes Trenchet et de Sage, de recevoir ici tous
mes remerciements et l'expression de ma sensibilité, pour tous les soins et
les peines qu'ils se sont données pour moi.

Je finis en déclarant devant Dieu et prêt à paraître devant lui que
je ne me reproche aucun des crimes que sont avancés contre moi. Fait
à la ville de Paris le 25 Décembre 1792. *LM*

Figure 9: King Louis XVI, handwriting at age 39.



nor a man of decisive action, unsuitable for taking the lead under the enormous pressures of the French Revolution. The handwriting shows that he was genuinely kind, decent and direct; but having been brought up under such negative auspices, he could not demonstrate nor implement his intentions until it was too late. His last testament belies much of the negative press he got through the centuries and is a truly moving document. It is only now that historians are rehabilitating him. Everybody knows that when he was executed he showed great courage and dignity. He was thirty-nine years old.

**Figure 10: Louis XVI
as young Dauphin, portrait,
Musée de Versailles.**

COUNT AXEL FERSEN

Portrait (Figure 11),
adult handwriting (Figure 12)

This chivalrous Swede was certainly the most loyal friend Marie Antoinette ever had; his devotion lasted until her death and beyond. The exact character of their relationship is, however, still a mystery. Were they lovers or not? Historians differ in their opinions; one certainly hopes so for her sake. That he was a ladies' man is known, not always behaving in best taste. But he was devoted to her, and their loving friendship was solid, continuous, a part of history.



Figure 11: Count Axel Fersen, portrait at age 27.

His handwriting is accomplished, cool and controlled, somewhat too smooth, it glides over the paper. He had the finesse, the lightness, and exterior urbane sophistication that Louis XVI lacked. He was sensitive, but also "Nordic" in his disposition. Focused and persevering, he was able to pursue his objectives with some determination, but not always with sufficient perspective. He kept a meticulous diary and wrote many letters. Some of them were destroyed or censored by relatives in the 19th century. His own death was as tragic as that of the Queen. He was assassinated by a mob in Stockholm.

ADDITIONAL HANDWRITINGS

Figure 13: Maria Theresia, Empress of Austria, mother of Marie Antoinette. A very powerful, resolute monarch, who "used" her daughters for political reasons.

Figure 14: Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, older brother of Marie Antoinette. She loved and respected him.

Figure 15: Handwritings and signatures of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI. Compare the three handwritings and signatures. Louis XIV, known as the Sun King, was by far the strongest King, who ruled from 1643 to 1715. Louis XV was the great-grandson of Louis XIV and Louis XVI was the grandson of Louis XV.

Figure 16: Handwriting of Marie Antoinette's son, the Dauphin who died in prison. He was brainwashed by his jailers and died of neglect, malnutrition, and probably tuberculosis at a very young age.

Figure 17: A composite of Marie Antoinette's signatures, dating from 1771 through 1791.

existe bon, peu - et depuis hier que
 nous avons appris la retraite. Des
 amies condamnées au bannissement et
 probablement hors de France, il y en
 a encore moins que jamais, il semble
 qu'il s'agit de chasser du malheur sur-
 tout ce qu'on entreprend pour cette
 famille infortunée, rien ne réussit et
 il n'y a que les secrets qui aient des
 chances. Jusqu'à la saison tout va bien
 mais depuis deux mois il ne
 vient de pluie, ce qui a tellement
 gâté les chemins que les voitures ne
 pourraient plus servir à l'armée. La
 disette commence aussi à y faire.
 Le grand ravage et ce sont sans doute
 ces deux causes qui auront décidé le d.
 de Brunswick à faire une retraite avec
 ses troupes, dans les conséquences. Les
 pauvres Suisses vont être au désespoir
 de tout sans nouvelles et leur...

Figure 12: Count Axel Fersen, 1793, age 38.

je crois que vous prêterais
 serment demain à midi
 comme conseiller d'état d'abord
 après cela vous viendriez
 encore à tems. pour l'infirmerie
 sion chez moi vous n'aurez
 point de taxe à payer mais
 bien à la chancellerie de
 l'empire je vous prie de
 me le marquer et qu'elle
 exige pour vous l'indemnité
 en même tems vous m'écriviez

à la cour, à la cour,
 à la cour, à la cour
 à la cour, à la cour
 Maria Theresia

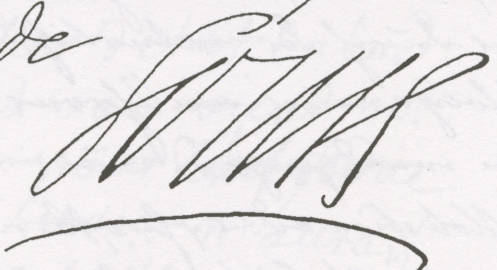
Maria Theresia

Figure 13: Maria Theresia, Empress of Austria, mother of Marie Antoinette.

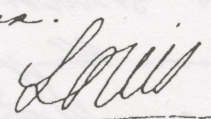
Meiner Tochter geübt den Befehl, an welchem sie
ist nicht geübt; als ein Beweis der Gerechtigkeit
geübt für den Herrn gewacht; als ein Beweis der
den die Tugend der Gerechtigkeit in diesem Sinne die
be folge, wie ein Herr folge, und Gerecht
werden wird, wie ein Herr in jeder Gerechtigkeit
wird. Man ist es geübt wie die Tugend der
Lange ist die Tugend der Gerechtigkeit, wie ein
wird es geübt ex facto mit einem Herrn
und der Gerechtigkeit als ein Herr geübt
Gerechtigkeit. wenn man Gerechtigkeit geübt
geübt und Gerechtigkeit werden kann man
wird man geübt und die Tugend der
gibt man Gerechtigkeit Gerechtigkeit geübt
um die Tugend und Gerechtigkeit Universal geübt
und die Gerechtigkeit geübt zu Gerechtigkeit
wird man Gerechtigkeit geübt ist geübt
wird man geübt zu Gerechtigkeit und Gerecht
als ein Herr der Gerechtigkeit geübt
Wird man Gerechtigkeit geübt will man Gerechtigkeit
ist man geübt zu Gerechtigkeit geübt

Figure 14: Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, older brother of Marie Antoinette.
(Original reduced to 95%)

Monsieur monseigneur
 mon adrester a ce que le
 marquis de Villars Cap^{te} des
 tout suites de
 ma garde



je vous envoie avec un projet de diamants pour
 mon fils. il faut commander tout a l'heure
 a vendre la grande Coie pour l'habit, et les
 boucles des souliers, et ne pas priver ses boutons
 en redemandant a m^r. de chasteillon les diamants
 de mon fils pour lesquels sont necessaires pour en
 vous demander a mon fils la quelle des deux
 formes de Boucles il aime le mieux.
 a elle ce 19^e may. 1744.



pret a paroître devant lui que
 ne wanceis contre moi. Fait
 1792.



Figure 15: Three generations of Kings,
 Louis XIV (top), Louis XV (middle), Louis XVI (bottom)

Vénérable administrateur
~~Vénérable administrateur~~
 Vénérable administrateur
 Vénérable administrateur
 une pierre précieuse
 laquelle est
 polie et bien taillée
 le Louis Dauphin

Figure 16: Marie Antoinette's young son.

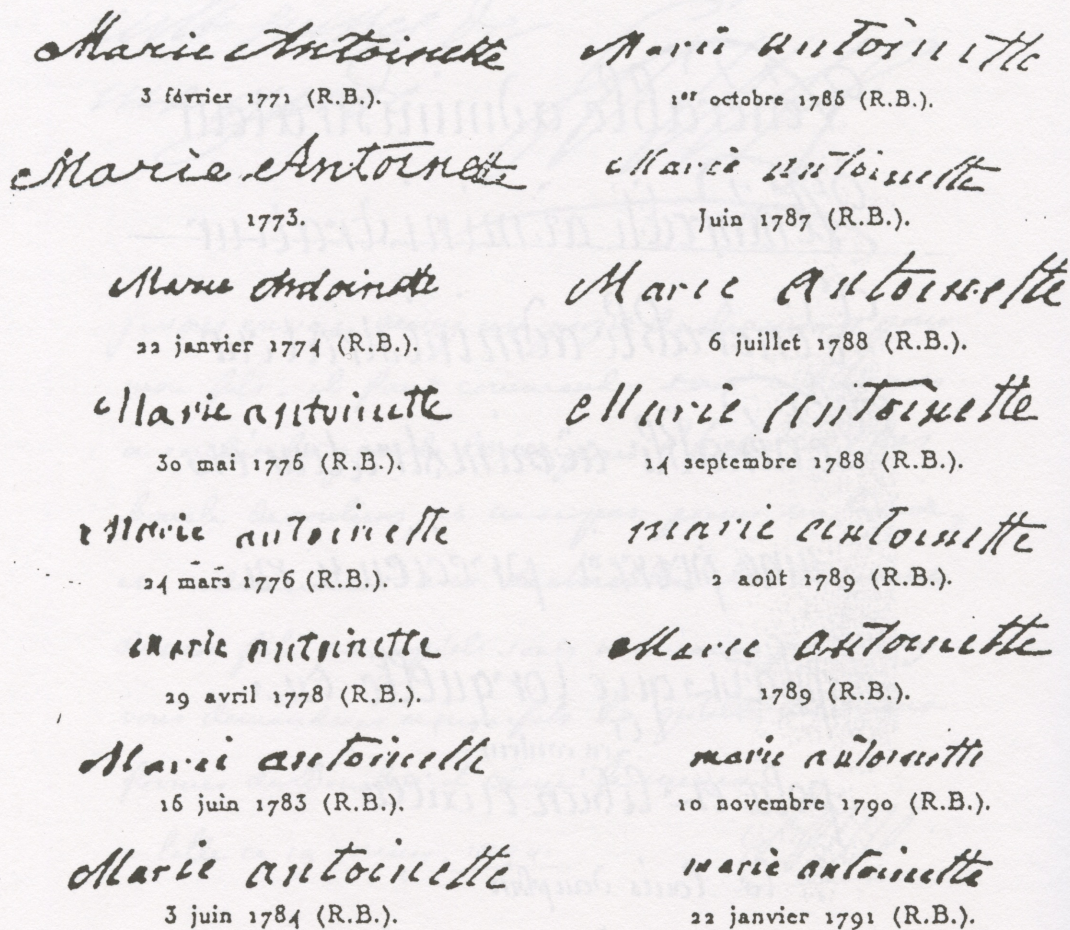


Figure 17: Composite of Marie Antoinette's signatures from 1771 to 1791.

CHRONOLOGY

- November 2, 1755: Maria Antonia is born in Vienna.
- August 17, 1765: death of Franz Stephan, Maria Antonia's father.
- April 17, 1770: marriage by proxy in Vienna.
- April 21, 1770: Maria Antonia leaves Vienna never to return, becomes Marie Antoinette.
- May 16, 1770: marriage in Versailles.
- May 10, 1774: death of Louis XV. Louis XVI becomes King and Marie Antoinette becomes Queen of France.
- April 1777: visit of her brother Joseph II (traveling incognito).
- December 18, 1778: birth of first child, followed by Louis 1781, Louis, 1785 (the Dauphin who died in prison); Sophie, 1786.
- November 29, 1780: death of Maria Theresa, Marie Antoinette's mother.
- 1785: the diamond necklace affair.
- 1787: death of daughter Sophie, health of Dauphin deteriorating.
- 1778: France faces financial crisis, Queen becomes unpopular (Madame Deficit).
- May 4, 1789: Opening of Estates General in Versailles.
- July 14, 1789: storming of the Bastille.
- October 5, 1789: March on Versailles — Royal family "escorted" to Paris by mob, arrival at Tuileries.
- June 20, 1791: flight from Paris organized by Count Fersen, followed by capture at Varennes and return to Paris.
- April 20, 1792: Louis XVI made the Assembly declare war on Austria.
- June 20, 1792: storming of the Tuileries.
- August 1792: Louis and Marie Antoinette leave the Tuileries, transfer to Temple, collapse of the monarchy.
- January 21, 1793: Execution of Louis XVI.
- August 2, 1793: Marie Antoinette taken to the Conciergerie.
- October 15, 1793: trial of Marie Antoinette before the Revolutionary Tribunal.
- October 16, 1793: Marie Antoinette taken by a cart to the scaffold, executed on the Place de la Revolution, now Place de la Concorde.

BIOGRAPHY: Renata Propper is a professional graphologist and personnel consultant. She received her training in handwriting analysis at the New School for Social Research under Daniel and Florence Anthony. Her articles, "Graphological Impressions of Pablo Picasso and George Braque" and "Dr. Hans Knobloch's Approach to Handwriting Analysis," were published in the *Journal of the American Society of Professional Graphologists*. She has also provided handwriting analyses to assist biographers on other occasions. Ms. Propper has lectured on Picasso and Braque, on personnel selection, and on Stanley and Livingston at the American Society of Professional Graphologists. She is a founding member of that society.